



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES

Office of the Secretary

Assistant Secretary for
Public Health Emergency Preparedness
Washington, D.C. 20201

December 14, 2004

The Honorable Edward J. Markey
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-2107

Dear Mr. Markey:

On behalf of Secretary Thompson, I am writing to respond to your request for information on the implementation of Section 127 of the Public Health and Bioterrorism Preparedness and Response Act of 2002 (P.L. 107-188). I am pleased to report the following steps have been taken in connection with Section 127:

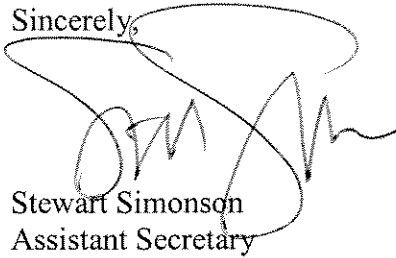
1. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) commissioned the National Academy of Sciences to conduct the study required in Section 127(e)(2). A copy of the Conclusions and Recommendations of the Academy's report is attached and marked Exhibit A.
2. An interagency working group has developed a draft of the guidelines required in Section 127(c). The draft guidelines have been provided to state and local stakeholders for comment. A copy of the draft guidelines is attached and marked Exhibit B.
3. The HHS Office of Public Health Preparedness is planning to purchase potassium iodide oral suspension for use in children. As you know, it is important for children likely to be exposed to radioactive iodine to take potassium iodide. The most efficient way to administer this countermeasure to children is by oral suspension.
4. As an interim measure, the Food and Drug Administration has developed an instructional video that could be used in an emergency to demonstrate to parents how to administer potassium iodide tablets to children.

HHS is making real progress in implementing Section 127 despite funding limitations, and we do so in order to comply with the letter and spirit of the law. While HHS is committed to fulfilling the requirements of Section 127, I am concerned that the expansion from 10 to 20 miles for use of potassium iodide suggests that the use of potassium iodide is a more effective strategy against radioactive iodine exposure than the science supports. Potassium iodide does not provide general protection from radiation. As we implement Section 127, it is important that we do nothing to indicate that potassium iodide is a surrogate for avoidance, evacuation, and decontamination.

Page 2 - The Honorable Edward J. Markey

Please have your staff feel free to call me if you have any concerns about our approach to implementing Section 127.

Sincerely,



Stewart Simonson
Assistant Secretary

Enclosures